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Sir Paul McCartney interview for The Sun

By SEAN HAMILTON

13–16 minutes

Sir Paul McCartney has admitted how tough it is to bare his emotions on stage - when he remembers his dead pals John Lennon and George Harrison and late wife Linda.

The former Beatle, who is back in London to promote a new live CD and DVD capturing a summer concert series to open the new Citi Field Stadium in New York, said he never used to risk crying on stage.

He said: "You are in contact with them again through the songs. In a way I'm revisiting them. It's sad and emotional.

"I couldn't have done it when I was 18-years-old because I would not have allowed myself to cry or go anywhere near that stuff. But now it's ok. I'm used to it."

The summer shows - featured on new film Good Evening New York City - had huge emotional significance for Paul because they were held on the site of the famous Shea Stadium where The Beatles played a landmark 34-minute show in 1965.

Paul had also appeared on stage with Billy Joel for the very last gig at the Shea Stadium.

Paul, 67, added: "It was three great nights for the band and for me personally it was very exciting to be back opening a new stadium on the site of the old Shea Stadium where we played 44 years ago. This time round you could hear us."

The DVD edits together his July concert with footage of the original Beatles show all those years ago.

Macca also handed out 75 little handheld Flip video cameras to fans who captured their version of the performance - and their efforts are also weaved in.

Paul has been spending a lot of time in the USA over the last couple of years since he started dating trucking heiress Nancy Shevall - and seems the happiest he has for a long time.

But he's back in Europe right up to Christmas to perform a mini festive European tour - his first for five years.

It starts in Hamburg on December 2 - the city where The Beatles honed their craft in the early 60s.

He then arrives at London's O2 for a Christmas concert on December 22. Tickets for that concert sold out in less than four seconds.

Here is the full transcript of a press conference Paul held in London on Wednesday evening to talk about the new DVD:

Q: Could you have ever imagined when you appeared at Shea Stadium with The Beatles that you'd be opening a new stadium in the same spot 44 years later?

A: It was amazing to be back there in the same space so many years later. And we certainly had better equipment than The Beatles! I said to the crowd, 'We couldn't hear a word we were singing on the night.

That's why we went hysterical and lost it. We couldn't hear because the girls were screaming.' I said that in all innocence. Then the crowd suddenly started screaming at me. I said 'yes, that's the sound!' I was just glad we filmed it. It was a great occasion.

Q: Did you feel sentimental about the old stadium? You had appeared with Billy Joel at the last concert before it was pulled down and you'd played

A: I seem to be involved with the history of this place. We opened it and closed it. Then I opened the new one. Unfortunately, I'm a Yankees fan! This isn't their stadium. I didn't tell them that.

Q: You gave out Flip cameras to the crowd. How did that come about?

A: Well I had this idea a long time ago to hand out cameras for a video. I always imagined it would be to a load of Japanese schoolgirls. That was the image I had in my mind.

I thought 'they'll film it and we'll be able to film them.' That never happened. But we thought it would work for this and went to some sort of blogging site and said 'if you want to come tomorrow night you'll get free tickets.' Amazingly, we got every single one back.

We took the footage off and then posted the camera back to them. If you see the straight footage it's nice but it's proper cameras and professionals. This was much more exciting.

Q: Which song would you recommend as an introduction to your music.

A: Back in the USSR. Only because my daughter likes it. That's the one I'd recommend.

Q: How do you keep in shape because you are looking good?

A: It's the suit. Beneath this suit I'm a wreck! I don't do anything really to be honest. I run a bit and do the gym occasionally. I suppose the best exercise is playing music which is amazingly cardio-vascular.

You do 33 songs and you don't think you are exercising - doing stuff with your fingers and playing the guitar. It's doesn't feel like exercise but it is.

Q: You did three dates. Do you wake up after the third day a bit stiff and worn out?

A: No it's not too bad because we do rehearsals before to get up to speed. The first day is a little bit rough. The second day the voice is like 'why did you do that to me'. I tell it, 'Because you're going on stage, ok!'

Q: Do you have to re-learn songs?

A: Constantly yes. I've written so many. It's not like I've written five and I can remember them. Something like Day Tripper is a real trip.

I said I'd never even attempt it. You have to play the complicated bassline. Part of you brain has to go to your fingers and keep that going. Then another part of your mind has to think 'you're the singer.

Forget him playing that bass line'. But you get it after a few rehearsals. It's a difficult one. You feel like you are splitting yourself in half.

Q: On the stage you talk about the memory of John and George. Is this concert meant to be a tribute to them and other people who you've lost?

A: It is. If I'm doing songs by The Beatles I remember the session when we recorded them. If I'm singing Something I'm thinking of George - of him playing the ukulele. I've got pictures of his up at the back. Similarly, with John and Linda. In a way you are in contact with them again through the songs. In a way I'm revisiting them. It's sad and emotional. There's a song I do called Here Today which is specifically written for John. That sometimes catches me out - and it does on this film. I realise I'm telling this man that I love him and it's like I'm publicly declaring this in front of all these people I don't know. I sometimes wonder what I'm doing.

Q: It's a cathartic experience but you are put it out there.

A: Well I couldn't have done it when I was 18-years-old because I would not have allowed myself to cry or go anywhere near that stuff. But now it's ok. I'm used to it.

Q: How do you choose a set list?

A: First of all I think what the people in the audience would definitely like me to do. For example, it would be hard for me to leave Hey Jude out.

So there's a main list of must-sings. Then there's a list of ones that I fancy doing. Perhaps Daytripper or I'm Down which I hadn't performed before. That becomes a big list which I take to rehearsal. Then my keyboard player shouts at me and says 'we can't do that'.

So I remind him who's boss! We're always trying to leave stuff out to give ourselves and easier time then we put them back in again.

Q: You perform a lot of John Lennon songs like Life In A Day and Give Peace A Change. If he were here today which

McCartney song would you like him to sing and why?

A: I've never thought about it. Maybe I'm Amazed comes into my mind. It would be interesting to hear him sing that. Just because it would. That will do.

Q: There's a moment where you just stop during the show to drink it all in. How come?

A: I had started to get too cocky. When you first start out you are terrified by the audience. You never know what you've got out there.

There could be anyone out there thinking 'what a total...' Particularly when you are younger, you are wondering about that. But know it's not so bad now . You ring your promoter and ask 'how did the tickets go?'. And he says 'they sold out in six minutes'. So you think 'I like these people and they like me'.

So I started to do that. It's a great occasion. I'm in City Fields. No-one's played here before. I've loving it. I'm a tourist in America. I've got my band. So I've started doing this thing where I take a minute to drink it all in. What the hell. It's my show!

Q: Can you remember a time before you weren't so cocky , before you weren't big when you didn't know how you would go down?

A: Maybe when we started to get big in America I thought 'we're safe now'. But I do remember being in Wembley for the NME Pollwinners Concert and they got all the top acts to come and perform for nothing.

I remember being on the steps of Wembley Town Hall getting ill with nerves. I thought 'this is no good'. We were a hit but it must have been a couple of years into The Beatles career. I remember in the very early days we played Stroud. Ever been

there? Don't.

Q: Did you ever play a gig with The Beatles where it didn't go well?

A: Yes in Stroud, as I say. We went there one day and hardly anyone showed up which was not wonderful. Then there were these louts - The Teds. They came along trying to pick up girls really.

They weren't worried about us. And they started throwing coins at us. We ended up picking them up! We went away a couple of shillings richer.

Q: Do you recall landing in America and realising how big you'd become?

A: We didn't know until we landed at JF which was then called Idlewild - no idea why. But the pilot had to call in to clear for landing and the word got round that there was a big crowd there. We came out the door and bloody hell.

Q: If you had to chose one song to be remembered by which one would you choose?

A: That is an impossible question. I always say your songs are like your babies. You don't' want to have a favourite. But I suppose - Maybe I'm Amazed.

Q: It seems amazing but you don't seem to get jaded.

A: No I keep expecting to get fed up but I don't. The strange thing is it gets a bit more exciting. And I think 'I can do this' so I'm not so worried. If I get it wrong I'm not so worried.

I've come to learn that the audience actually likes that. It used to terrify me the idea that I'd get it wrong. A while ago when we were playing Paris and we started Penny Lane but I came in on

the wrong verse. It's supposed to start 'There's a barber' but I started with the fireman line which leads somewhere else and the band went there. So they ended up in the middle and I was in the second verse. It went very wrong.

So I stopped it and said sorry. But I was man enough to admit it and we re-started. People loved it. The next day the reviews said the best moment was when I stopped. It proved it wasn't on tape and all live.

Q: Do you get nervous now?

A: Not so much. I now I've got a good band. But I sometimes do.

Q: You seem to make a lot of noise for a small band - four of five of you.

A: It's nice at the end of the evening to take a bow and realise it just us. I used to feel sorry in a way for Elvis when he was in Vegas and he had about fifty people on stage with him and he didn't sound better than his early records when there was three people.

So I sometimes worry that can be a cover up 'he's not doing too well let's get a lot of people up there'

Q: The first date of the European Tour will be in Hamburg where you started. Will there be anything to mark that?

A: There will be a couple of new numbers but nothing specially for Hamburg. But doubt it will be Komm Gib Mir Deine Hand - which is I Want To Hold Your Hand in German!

Q:But you visit The O2 In London on December 23 - will you be doing any Christmas songs?

A: Yes when it's those gigs right before Christmas we'll do a

couple.

Q: Have you given Pipes Of Peace any thought?

A: We haven't! But it's not too late. I meant to mention it in rehearsal but I forgot.

Q: Do you get a chance to experience a city when you are there?

A: It depends how long you are there. If you are staying over and doing a gig the next night you can normally have a little look around. I insist on doing that. I'm not a big entourage person.

So I will hop off and go and look at whatever is there. If you go round with an army of security people notice you. But I do get asked a lot 'Are you Paul McCartney' I say 'no. did you think he'd be here?!'

Q: When you perform is there any spirit of The Beatles up there?

A: I still think I'm in The Beatles. It's something you don't want to lose.

For a while with Wings I didn't do Beatles songs on purpose because I wanted to create a new thing. Promoters would ask if I'd do a couple of Beatles numbers and I'd say no. But once I got beyond that phase I realised it would be nice. And I know the audience would like to hear Beatles songs.

So I've started to enjoy doing that. When you are doing them you can be thinking of the session or a little memory that is only going on in your head. It's good for me that way.

Q: I suppose it's cyclical - you always want to do the newest things.

A: Well yeah. Until the people start walking out! Then I think I

better thrown in a Beatles song. It's a dream of mine. You know you get these recurring dreams.

Actor friends of mine say they have a dream where they are on stage and suddenly don't know what play they are in. It happens to me musically. I'll be playing something and then people start walking out. So I think 'quickż..Long Tall Sally!....'

Q: You seem to be enjoying touring more than you ever have done?

A: Yes it's that thing of not being jaded. [COUGHS] he says choking. Imagine that . if I coughed it.'quick buy my DVD!'.

Q: Will you be taking time off in 2010.

A: The thing is people think I'm busy because they see me on the telly ort whatever. Well the last thing was Children In Need and that was a little while ago.

I haven't done much since. So I'm not really working as hard as it looks. I'll work next year but I will take a lot of holidays as well.

- **Good Evening New York City is released on December 14 on Mercury Records.**